

REMARKS

Claims 1-36 are currently pending in this application. This Reply amends claim 1. The Office Action states that the pending claims are drawn to the following inventions pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 121:

Group I - claims 1-17, drawn to a process for binding sheets together;

Group II - claims 18-25, drawn to a binding apparatus;

Group III - claims 26-35, drawn to a sheet collector; and

Group IV - claim 36, drawn to a binding apparatus.

Applicants respectfully traverse this Restriction Requirement, but in order to advance the prosecution of the application, provisionally elect the invention of Group II.

Restriction between claims in a patent application is proper where the claims are directed to inventions that are either independent or distinct, and there would be a serious burden on the Examiner if restriction were not required. MPEP § 803. Applicants respectfully submit that these criteria have not been met.

The Action notes that Groups I and II are related as a process and a product, but states that restriction is proper because “Group I discloses a process that can be practiced by another and materially different apparatus than the product of Group II or by hand, and therefore, does not require the product of Group II.” Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite “an automated process for binding sheets together,”

to exclude performance of the process by hand. As shown in the comparison of independent claims 1 of Group I and 18 of Group II, each step of the claimed automated process correlates to a particular structure of the apparatus. The chart also shows that the claims are so interrelated that there could be no serious burden on the Examiner if required to perform a search covering both groups of claims.

Claim 1	Claim 18
An automated process for binding sheets together, the binding process comprising the steps of:	Binding apparatus for binding sheets together, the apparatus comprising:
feeding successive individual sheets to a folding apparatus; folding each sheet along a fold line;	sheet folding apparatus for individually folding sheets along a fold line;
applying adhesive to the fold line of selected sheets as they are passed over a supporting surface; and	a supporting surface on which the sheets are supported as adhesive is applied from an adhesive applicator to the fold line of selected sheets prior to stacking; and
stacking successive sheets such that the fold lines of each sheet are substantially aligned.	a sheet collector for stacking successive sheets such that the fold lines of each sheet are substantially aligned.

Claim 36 of Group IV is directed to a “binding apparatus for binding sheets together,” and differs only from claim 18 of Group II in that it recites a sheet collector “in accordance with claim 26.” Every limitation of claim 18 is therefore recited in claim 36, contrary to the Action’s statement that “Group VI does not

Applicant: Cracknell et al.
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disclose a process in accordance with Group I and does not disclose all the limitations of Groups II or III."

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement between Groups I, II, and IV, and examination of claims 1-25 and 36.

If for any reason the Examiner believes that an interview, either telephonically or in person, would advance prosecution of the application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned to arrange an interview.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement and allowance of all of the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

Cracknell et al.

By /Alissa L. Saenz/
Alissa L. Saenz
Registration No. 61,750

Volpe and Koenig, P.C.
United Plaza, Suite 1600
30 South 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Telephone: (215) 568-6400

ALS/dmp